Enabling strategies enact academic integrity policy. Without long-term, sustainable and practical support resources, a policy will not be enacted, no matter how well it is articulated.

The cases in this resource cover a range of academic integrity issues in Australian universities with application for a wider audience. These case studies have been developed by the Academic Integrity Standards Project.

“...I suspect that every senior manager needs to have some training in the issue of academic integrity principles. I learnt mine on the job, so I think that needs to be worked through so that the policy and the implementation and the people who have that power understand those principles ...So I think the case study models really useful. How would you deal with someone who had this story; you know, what would you do, and then work out what you'd do pragmatically versus where the policy fits from there.” (Senior Manager, University B, Academic Integrity Standards Project)

Although they may be based on real life stories, they have been adapted and anonymised for the purposes of this project resource; pseudonyms are used in every instance. The case studies are designed to be used as triggers for discussion in group seminars and primarily target teaching staff, although they could be used for discussion with students or other academic integrity stakeholders.

Support for this project/activity has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views in this project do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

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Prevention

The following cases focus on practical strategies to prevent breaches of academic integrity. These include proactive measures to educate students about academic writing, and designing out plagiarism in assessments.

- Understanding of academic writing
- Designing out plagiarism
- Collusion or collaboration
- Falsification and plagiarism
- Group work: Assessment at stake?
  - PhD loses his way
- Policy and practice
- Academic integrity in TNE
Understanding of academic writing

Title of case: EAL\(^1\) / ESL student’s lack of understanding of text ownership in academic writing conventions

Target audience: Academics addressing inadvertent plagiarism in students’ written work

Key issue being addressed: Appraising and addressing students’ lack of understanding of ‘text ownership’ and ‘acknowledgment’.

Purpose of the case: To scaffold students’ understanding of text ‘ownership’ and academic conventions of text re-use.

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.
- Two resources at http://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/plagiarism/
  - “Research-Writing: Learning a writing skill and thereby avoiding plagiarism”; and audio-narrated version of this text:
  - “Avoiding Plagiarism – Achieving academic writing”

The case

Abstract
An international English as an Additional Language student has difficulty understanding why copying text is not appropriate scholarly practice.

A lecturer at an Australian university interviews a student (Hua) during stage 1 of following up an academic integrity breach. She is an international student, in her second year of a Bachelor degree. Her written English is comprehensible but marked by non-idiomatic expressions and grammatical errors that characterise writing examples of students at an International English Language Test Score (IELTS) level of 6. However, there are several paragraphs that are written in perfect academic prose with sophisticated word choice and sentence complexity, that clearly indicate to the lecturer that these passages are not the student’s own writing.

The lecturer points to one of these paragraphs
Lecturer: This is not your own writing, is it?
Hua: Yes it is.
Lecturer: But you took it out of a book, didn’t you?
Hua: Yes I did.
Lecturer: Then it’s NOT your own, is it?
Hua: Yes it is. I believe it.

\(^{1}\) EAL – ‘English as an Additional language’ is used as a more respectful term than ESL - ‘English as the Second Language’ when applied to Australian universities’ international and immigrant students, many of whom have several languages other than English
Questions for discussion
1. What is incongruous about the student’s response from the academic’s perspective?
2. How can Hua’s answer be understood in her own terms? (e.g. her educational background)
3. Is it likely to be an educational or disciplinary matter? What further questions must be asked to determine this?
4. How can the tutor explain the notion of ‘text ownership’ in this situation?

Some suggestions
1. It seems to be incongruous that she blatantly admits her breach. Does it suggest that she does not consider it a breach?
2. Consider what has been the role of source texts in Hua’s previous education in China; consider the length of time it can take to learn to understand new discipline content, and apply this to the learning of a new approach to academic writing.
3. Consider whether she (a) has been ‘informed of’; or (b) has understood the notion of ‘acknowledging’ the source material.
4. Consider whether she understands the difference between written genres that are (a) a writer’s unsupported opinions, as for example in a leisure magazine article; and (b) academic writing which relies on providing ‘evidence’ from the literature in support of the writer’s views.

See the following resources at http://www.adelaide.edu.au/learning/staff/plagiarism/ and click on the ‘Resources’ tab to open

a. Plagiarism Framework – Student as Apprentice Researcher
This framework is designed to help academic staff in examining the cultural and language factors that may limit the academic expression by a student at any given stage of their transition into university, and in forming realistic expectations of the likely levels of performance on written assignments.

b. QA in Plagiarism Poster – Assists staff in pre-empting inadvertent plagiarism by extending students’ access to examples of academic language

c. Avoiding Plagiarism – Achieving Academic Writing – an audio narrated PowerPoint resource that explains to students how good referencing brings academic writing into line with the requirements of all research: it gives readers of the academic text access to the sources (literature) on which the writer’s point of view is based, and enables them to ‘replicate’ the train of reasoning, just as good descriptions of methodology and results of an experiment enable replication of the experiment.
Designing out plagiarism

Title of case: Assessment design to discourage copy-and-paste assignments
Target audience: Academic teaching staff, Academic staff developers
Key issue being addressed: Assessments that invite copy-and-paste plagiarism
Purpose of the case: To assist academic staff in “designing out” plagiarism opportunities

Materials and preparation
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Copies of recent assessment tasks in your own courses

The case

Abstract
Jennifer does not allow enough time to write her assignment and so copies and pastes from internet sources. She is found out and receives an outcome for a ‘first offence’.

Jennifer is a 2nd year Bachelor of Education student. The topic of her first assignment was: ‘School Bullying: What are some causes of bullying in schools? What are the effects on the persons involved? What interventions are possible?’

The timing for submission coincided with two other assignments. She had put off starting on these during the earlier part of the semester, and had run out of time as the deadlines loomed. She remembered some personal experience of being bullied in her middle years of high school and so decided to put her effort into the other two assignments and ‘wing it’ with this one.

When she came to write it, there was very little time left. She scanned two readings on the topic, copied and pasted relevant passages together into a patchwork, with suitable linking texts of her own. She modified the downloaded material, changing sufficient amounts of the downloaded wordings to blend them in with her own style and felt that she had made a fair job under the topic’s three headings.

However, her lecturer is suspicious, puts the assignment through text-matching software. Jennifer’ short-cut is found out and receives the prescribed outcome for a ‘first offence’.

Points for consideration
- Assignment question asking no more than re-stating facts and ideas that are easily found and downloaded
- Coordinating the timing of assignments to avoid bottle necks
- The use of Turnitin or other text matching software on individual assignments rather than the whole class
Questions for discussion

1. What would the outcome have been for Jennifer’s blatant short-cut, according to your university’s academic integrity policy?
2. Should the lecturer submit all the assignments to the text-matching service, rather than just the one that looked suspect? What action would she take if she found that Jennifer’s approach was more widespread than first thought?
3. Would you agree that the assignment was “just asking for students to plagiarise”? (James et al 2002, p.47) (Check your own assignments against this point).

Some useful References


Asking for drafts ... Assessing process as well as final product ... Reconsidering essay titles ... Using defined requirements and narrow ask specifications ... Insisting that students engage with the literature ... Using other methods of recording learning for assessment (pp41-48)

Dysthe (2011) ‘What is the Purpose of Feedback when Revision is not Expected?’ A Case Study of Feedback Quality and Study Design in a First Year Master’s Programme. Journal of Academic Writing 1(1) pp 126-134
http://e-learning.coventry.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/joaw/

The most important implication for future practice ... is the importance of the study design for students’ use of feedback for learning (p140)


Insist on evidence for significant claims and let students know that the assignment will not be assessed if this evidence is missing (p45)

(Citing Culwin & Lancaster, 2001) Set the assignment specification on a unique or recent event on which there is unlikely to be much material available (p44)
Collusion versus collaboration

**Target audience:** Lecturers assessing student tasks

**Key issue being addressed:** Difficulty of making a decision about assessing and dealing with work which is potentially the result of collusion.

**Purpose of the case:** To assist lecturers to work through their own policy and reflect on teaching and learning practices to address a seemingly simple case.

**Materials and preparation needed to answer case:**
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Definition of collusion/collaboration
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

**The case**

*Abstract*

Two international students with English as an additional language submit work which is very similar in structure and ideas, but using their own words. Their lecturer is concerned that this may constitute collusion.

Tina and Muriel are two international business students in their second semester of study at an Australian university. Both students have been regularly attending classes in this core communication skills subject. The intended learning outcomes for this subject include writing an academic essay with appropriate acknowledgement and evidence of independent thinking.

While their English is not perfect, Tina and Muriel seem to be able to communicate effectively and they contribute to small group discussions. Muriel is more confident and will ask questions and comment in whole class discussions. Tina actually says little, but seems to be engaged in class activities. Both students have completed an English academic preparation course at the university language centre.

The lecturer is now marking the first writing tasks. She has not seen her students’ writing before. The students have completed some online quizzes which will contribute to a final grade. The lecturer noted that some of the students, including Tina and Muriel, took less than a minute to do each quiz - she had estimated that the quizzes would each take up to an hour to complete. Now that she is reading the essays she is aware that Tina and Muriel’s...
essays are uncomfortably similar in ideas and structure. She calls the students in to talk about this.

In the meeting, Muriel says that they did prepare their essays together, but she is adamant that they wrote them up separately. The lecturer points out that the structure of the essay is the same, with each paragraph in the body focused on the same argument, and each supported with the same examples from the same sources. Muriel points out that there are no text matches. The lecturer acknowledges this, and also notes that there are many more language errors in Tina’s essay.

The lecturer explains to the students that they could be accused of collusion. She decides to give the students the same mark for essay structure, ideas, evidence and referencing. Both students lose marks for independent thinking and Tina loses marks for the quality of her English language. The lecturer is uneasy about this case: she feels that the students were not really naïve, so perhaps she was too lenient. On the other hand, she wonders about her teaching and what she could have done better to have ensured that this situation had not arisen.

Questions for discussion
1. How would you explain the difference between collusion and collaboration?
2. Based on your own university’s policy, did the lecturer make the correct decision in this case?
3. What does your policy say about collusion and collaboration?
4. What would you take into account if you were deciding how to deal with this situation?
5. Do you have any advice for this lecturer with regard to her concerns about her teaching?
6. How could your university support lecturers to develop teaching practices and assessments which ensure an actual measure of what students can do.
7. Do you have any suggestions for how your university could support lecturers to make decisions in cases like this one?

Definition of collusion:

"Unauthorised collaboration on assessable work with another person or persons".  
(Academic Integrity Policy 2011, La Trobe University,  

“Presentation by a student of an assignment as his or her own which is in fact the result in whole or in part of unauthorised collaboration with another person or persons.”  
(Academic honesty and plagiarism, University of Melbourne,  
**Falsification and plagiarism**

**Target audience:** Subject coordinators, research supervisors, academic integrity decision makers

**Key issue being addressed:** How to design out opportunities for falsifying data

**Purpose of the case:** To assist research supervisors and course/program and subject designers to consider strategies to reduce the risk of students falsifying data

**Materials and preparation needed to answer case:**
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

**The case**

**Abstract**

Despite designing an ‘authentic’ assessment based on a work related task, Bonnie discovers that one student fabricated the data for his report. As the student has already graduated, she is advised not to pursue the matter.

Bonnie, the subject coordinator in a postgraduate coursework program, designed the subject assessment to be authentic and offer students the opportunity to undertake assessment tasks that are similar to those that will form part of their work role on graduation. To this end she asked that student apply a particular framework of problem identification, analysis and evaluation to a real organisation. Those students in current employment often nominated their employing organisation as the one they would select for this case study. The subject coordinator offers to assist international students with introductions to local organisations.

Bonnie follows up with one particular international student, Edgar, who had few local contacts. However he reassures Bonnie that he has found a suitable local organisation, which he names. He indicates that the staff are very helpful and is able to provide Bonnie with the signed agreement from the organisation that she requires that all students submit well in advance of the assignment due date. Bonnie is vaguely familiar with the nominated organisation and is pleased that Edgar has demonstrated much more resourcefulness and initiative than she had anticipated.

Edgar submits the completed report on the assignment due date. It is thorough, well-written and meets all of the assessment criteria for the assignment. Edgar graduates and leaves Australia to continue his career with a qualification accredited by a national and international organisation.
One year later Bonnie comes across a report in one of the professional journals she subscribes to that looks remarkably like the report submitted by Edgar in the previous academic year. Closer examination reveals that the publication date preceded Edgar’s assignment submission date by some months, Edgar was not the identified author of the published report and that Edgar’s submitted assignment matches the published report apart from the substitution of the name of a local organisation in place of the one identified in the published report.

Bonnie considers that she has evidence of Edgar’s falsification of data and of plagiarism. She seeks the advice of the program director. He dissuades her from pursuing the matter. He points out that the student has now graduated and is no longer in Australia. He indicates that he is concerned about the risk to the reputation of the program should an investigation reveal how easy it was for a student to falsify data for a research report and to plagiarise undetected.

Without the support of her program director Bonnie decides forego any further investigation of the matter. Instead she considers how she might re-design the subject’s assessment in order to reduce the incentive and opportunity that students have to falsify research data and to plagiarise.

Questions for discussion

1. What does your university policy say about designing the assessment of student learning to support student learning?
2. What does your university policy say about ‘work-integrated learning’, ‘work-based learning’ or ‘authentic learning’?
3. What other strategies could Bonnie implement to reduce the incentive to, and risk of, students falsifying data?
4. Bonnie did try to obtain some assurance that students were authentic in their claims to have an agreement with a local organisation for the purposes of their research data collection. Were there any additional steps she could/should take?
5. What does your university policy say about dealing with evidence of/allegations of academic misconduct that occur after the student has graduated?
6. Does the program coordinator’s recommendation that Bonnie not pursue an investigation into her evidence and suspicions of Edgar’s misconduct accord with your own expectations of the university’s educational integrity?
7. Does your own university’s policy indicate that every suspicion of academic misconduct related to falsification, fraud or plagiarism must be reported or investigated? How does this accord with what you know of custom and practice in your own university.
8. Do you have any suggestions for how your university’s policy could be improved to better support the subject coordinator (Bonnie) or the program director?
9. Is there any conflict of interest here?

Suggested readings


Group work: Assessment at stake?

Target audience: Students, tutors, lecturers and academic integrity decision makers

Key issues being addressed:
- Responsibility for academic integrity
- Poor scholarship or academic misconduct
- Task expectations and group assessment

Purpose of the case: To build awareness of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, in supporting academic integrity and dealing with misconduct in the context of group work.

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

The case

Abstract
Five students struggle to work together on a group assignment. Four of the students are concerned that the fifth student has plagiarised her part of the assignment and so rewrite her section. The Subject Coordinator is called in to adjudicate.

Five students in their first semester at university are working on a group assignment. Trying to find time to meet in their busy schedules of university classes, paid work and family commitments has been a challenge, hence they have only had one face-to-face meeting and some email exchanges. Now close to the deadline, four of the students are worried that one student’s contribution is a copy and paste. They have asked the student to rewrite her draft, explaining that they could all be penalised for plagiarism. One of the group members even offered to help her with the text, but she does not respond. Her final contribution contains chunks of unattributed copied text interspersed with sentences that don’t make sense.

The four students meet with their tutor to request that they not be penalised because of the copyist’s poor work. The tutor explained that, in this course, being able to work as a team was an important competency which they needed to master in order to demonstrate a required professional standard. The students are told to return to their ‘working in a team guidelines’ and to use these to resolve the problem. The students feel this is unfair and that the problem is insurmountable.

The group assignment is submitted, with the plagiarised section hastily rewritten by the other students. After receiving a poor mark for this section, the four students appeal to the subject coordinator who reviews the case and calls the copyist in for a chat about her copied text.
She breaks down and says that she should not be seen as a ‘cheater’. She says she was excluded by the group, that they lacked integrity because they did not follow the guidelines and had not developed a proper team, and that, although some of her work had been copied it was not cheating because she had understood the texts, and had found the best answers. She acknowledged that academic writing was a struggle for her.

Questions for discussion

Students
1. What do you predict happened as a result of the meeting between the student copyist and the coordinator?
2. What does academic integrity mean to you?
3. How does your policy define academic integrity?
4. List student responsibilities to support academic integrity.
5. What does your university policy say about responsibilities for academic integrity?
6. Are the students in the group dealing with academic misconduct or poor scholarship?
7. Re-tell this case so that learning opportunities for all the students are maximised, in a context where academic integrity is fostered.
8. Would you like to know what happened following the meeting with the coordinator?

Staff
1. What should happen to the student copyist?
2. What does academic integrity mean to you?
3. How does your policy define academic integrity?
4. List staff responsibilities to support academic integrity and ensure proper assessment takes place.
5. What does your university policy say about responsibilities for academic integrity?
6. Discuss the role of the tutor and / or coordinator in this case.
7. What are the issues of assessment in group work?
8. Re-tell this case so that learning opportunities for all the students are maximised, in a context where academic integrity is fostered.
9. Would you like to know what happened following the meeting with the coordinator?

Following the meeting

The group mark was reassessed without taking into account the copyist’s section. She was sent to the Academic Language and Learning Centre for advice about proper acknowledgement and was advised to have regular consultations for help with her academic writing.

The subject coordinator asked the Teaching and Learning staff to work with her on the curriculum so that assessment tasks match the learning activities. Further complaints were received from students about the difficulties of trying to work together in a group. A peer marking system was trialed with mixed results.
Falsified professional credentials

Target audience: Professional training providers, Program Conveners, Heads of School, Discipline heads.

Key issue being addressed: The potential for unqualified individuals to misrepresent themselves as qualified in professional contexts.

Purpose of the case: To reduce the incidence of people falsely claiming professional credentials by instigating discussion about procedures for professional qualifications, accreditation and the possibility for cross-institutional checking.

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:
- Copy of relevant discipline professional entry standards
- Copy of professional admission rules
- Copy of university discipline program offerings

The case

Abstract
A man posing as a lawyer pretends to have professional qualifications from a local law school poses as a solicitor and provides advice to a number of clients, including drafting wills, negotiating with separated spouses and their lawyers, and conducting pleas in mitigation for clients on criminal charges in the Local Court.

Background

Bernard obtained a Bachelor of Arts before enrolling as a graduate student to do an LLB at a law school. His results in law subjects were poor over two years with a number of fails due in some cases to breaches of academic integrity. In his third year Bernard withdrew and suspended his enrolment on medical grounds to avoid failing more subjects in which he was performing poorly.

In the meantime, Bernard had been working part-time as a law clerk at a small legal firm and was able to take copies of documents from on-going files in a range of different types of legal matters. Bernard makes a photocopy of his employer’s legal practicing certificate and carefully changes the details so that it displays his own name.

Using that document and other resources ‘borrowed’ from his employer Bernard sets up an office in a spare room at his home and starts to promote himself as a solicitor on Facebook. Posing as a solicitor and doing cases for nothing to begin with, Bernard starts to build a case load including
i) advising a friend’s mother on a wills matter,
ii) he wrote several letters, in which he signed his name as ‘solicitor’ for another friend in attempting to negotiate a neighborhood dispute,
iii) he accepted a fee from a person in order to write a threatening letter, signing it as ‘solicitor’, to that person’s former spouse in which he threatened to apply for a ADVO (domestic violence restraining order) and
iv) he appeared in the Local Court as a ‘solicitor’ representing several paying clients for pleas in mitigation concerning criminal charges.

The incident
Another solicitor observed Bernard’s lack of competence in the Local Court and discussed her concerns privately with the magistrate. The magistrate then asked Bernard on his next appearance in court where he had studied law and where he had been admitted to practice. In answering the court, Bernard named the law school where he had been enrolled for three years, and said that he had been admitted in the Local Court the previous year. The magistrate then asks the court officer and attending police to place Bernard in custody and he is subsequently charged with fraud.

Questions for discussion
1. How easy is it for students to obtain sufficient information from professional courses and to misrepresent themselves as qualified, competent and admitted to practice in a professional discipline?
2. Have large class numbers in professional programs destroyed the sense of professional community and allowed individuals to exploit their anonymity for personal advantage?
3. Should there be more accessible registers of professionals to help deter fraudulent misrepresentations and falsified credentials for personal gain?
4. Should professional schools publish annual graduation lists to help deter fraudulent claims of qualification?
**PhD student loses his way**

**Target audience:** Higher Degree by Research Supervisors, Heads of School, academic integrity decision makers, postgraduate research students.

**Key issue being addressed:** The potential for misunderstandings about academic integrity for mature-aged postgraduate students.

**Purpose of the case:** To assist supervisors to consider the needs of students returning to postgraduate research study, and to consider their own responsibilities in mentoring and supporting those students.

**Materials and preparation needed to answer case:**
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures. Check if there is one specifically for HDR students.
- Copy of the university’s guidelines for postgraduate student conduct and/or policy relating to the supervisory relationship.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

**The case**

**Abstract**

*An aged PhD student is not provided with adequate support during the early stages of his candidature and submits a research proposal which contains plagiarism. Rather than face an academic integrity investigation, he withdraws from his program of study.*

Michael is a 32 year-old Australian student who has recently returned to higher education to complete a PhD after a break of ten years. His First Class Honours degree in English Literature ensured his acceptance into the prestigious doctoral program, including a full scholarship. During the last decade Michael has worked in public relations and marketing, most recently as the Marketing Manager for a large publishing company. Although well paid and fairly satisfied with his career to date, Michael wants to fulfill his original ambition of becoming an academic.

Michael has missed the University’s orientation sessions for postgraduate students, but as a mature-aged student with an excellent academic background, he is confident that he will have no difficulties with his study. Michael is slightly surprised that he has no set classes, his Supervisor does not set a regular meeting schedule, and she rarely responds to emails. Michael learns that his only requirement is that he must complete a Research Proposal for presentation within six months of starting at the university. Other than that, he is pretty much on his own. There are only two other PhD students in the English Department and they rarely work on campus.

Michael’s days are unstructured and he feels like he is on holidays. He reads broadly and finds that his original idea for a topic has been extensively researched. He changes topic a number of times but finds it increasingly difficult to settle on a project. The months go...
quickly, and three weeks before the six month deadline, Michael’s supervisor sends a short email reminding him that the Research Proposal is due. Although he hasn’t written anything yet, Michael feels confident that he will be able to pull something together in time; after all, it’s only a 30 page document and he used to knock reports up in a couple of days when he was a Marketing Manager. Unfortunately a number of personal circumstances get in the way, and with just a few days until the deadline, Michael puts in an ‘all-nighter’ just like he used to do as an undergraduate student. He cobbles together parts of his original Honours thesis, interspersed with bits and pieces from unattributed online articles and internet sources. Although not completely satisfied with the final product, Michael submits the Proposal with the view that his Supervisor will probably provide feedback and make suggestions for revisions anyway. He signs a cover sheet stating “I declare the work in this document to be my own, except where acknowledgement of sources is made”, and authorising the university to check the assignment for plagiarism using text-comparison software.

The day before Michael is due to present his proposal, he receives a standard email from the academic integrity decision maker (AIDM), stating that his work has been forwarded for investigation and that he will not be permitted to present the proposal as scheduled. When Michael contacts his supervisor, she refuses to speak to him, stating that university policy dictates that all correspondence relating to potential academic misconduct must be directed to the AIDM.

Michael is very anxious as he has no comparable experience in his professional life or in his earlier studies. Rather than face an academic integrity inquiry he withdraws from his candidature and resumes his former employment.

Questions for discussion
1. How much of this issue is Michael’s responsibility?
2. How much responsibility should Michael’s supervisor take for this situation?
3. What responsibility does the university have to ensure the integrity of research, from postgraduate students’ preliminary investigations through to professors’ published papers?
4. How might this situation have been avoided?
5. What type of support does your university offer higher degree by research students?
   a. Is this support offered in all study periods?
   b. Who is responsible for ensuring that the student avails themself of this support?
6. Are mature-aged students offered any additional resources/support?
7. Was this breach of academic integrity the result of laziness, poor study habits, lack of understanding or inadequate support? Or all of these factors? Brainstorm ways to engage HDR students in learning about academic integrity requirements.
8. Brainstorm ways to engage HDR supervisors in understanding academic integrity requirements and how to communicate these to their students.
Does good policy mean good practice?

Target audience: Policy & Governance Units, Subject Coordinators, Heads of School, Academic conduct Advisors, Teachers (sessional and tenured), Administrative Staff

Key issue being addressed: Determining and addressing any barriers that might prevent the implementation of a university’s academic integrity policy.

Purpose of the case: To assist staff to work through their own policy to understand their own and their colleagues’ responsibility with respect to policy implementation

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

The case

Abstract

In response to varied practices across faculties, University X develops an institutional policy on academic integrity. After five years of implementation, staff have not engaged adequately with the new policy.

University X is a large university that had operated for many years without an institutional policy on academic integrity. Individual faculties had their own idiosyncratic rules and responses related to student breaches of academic integrity. This proved particularly problematic at University X where many students were enrolled in combined degrees and so were receiving mixed messages about the consequences of academic integrity breaches.

Five years ago, in response to this obvious issue of inequity, the university wrote a comprehensive policy outlining the practice to be followed by staff when breaches of academic integrity were suspected. The policy was clearly articulated and the processes made as simple and streamlined as possible for staff to undertake. To support the policy a series of online resources were developed for staff. Students were made aware of the institutional policy and issues of academic integrity generally though a compulsory online module which all new students entering University X were required to complete.

Fast forward five years.....practically the entire student population of University X have now completed the online module and are familiar with the existence of the institutional policy. By contrast, anecdotal evidence strongly indicates that the staff knowledge and understanding of the university’s policy related to academic integrity is far less established.
As a consequence, even with the existence of a good policy, practice has not necessarily changed substantially. A series of initiatives to inform staff of the policy and their obligation to implement it, have been employed including emails to all staff, the production and distribution of an information pamphlet, and a dedicated session about the policy at induction of new staff. It appears there are two main issues. Firstly, despite these initiatives many staff are still unaware of the existence of the policy and secondly a proportion of the staff that do know of the policy still believe that it is easier to either turn a blind eye or deal with the matter without engaging in the policy processes. The consequence of this is that the university is unable to accurately determine the degree to which academic misconduct is a problem at University X and whether or not there has been a measurable change over time of academic integrity.

Questions for discussion

1. What does your university’s policy do to support the efforts of staff when dealing with academic integrity breaches by students?
2. How simple is the reporting process at your university?
3. How much work is involved in the process for the staff member who first suspects or identifies that an instance of academic integrity breach has occurred?
4. What measures are in place at an institutional level to keep staff (particularly sessional staff) informed of the university policy on academic integrity?
5. What measures are in place at the Faculty or School level to keep staff (particularly sessional staff) informed of the university policy on academic integrity?
6. How well does your university’s policy on academic integrity measure up against the 5 elements of an exemplary policy outlined in Bretag et al.(2011)?
7. Do you have any suggestions for how your university’s academic integrity policy and processes can be improved?

Suggested readings


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2 This reference does not relate specifically to the implementation of academic integrity policy but raises some interesting considerations around the general implementation of policy.
Academic integrity in Transnational Education

**Target audience:** Course Coordinators, Academic Integrity Decision Makers (AIDMs), teaching staff, Administrative Staff, transnational partner representatives.

**Key issue being addressed:** Exploring issues that might impact on the implementation of a university’s academic integrity policy in transnational contexts.

**Purpose of the case:** To assist staff to understand their own and their colleagues’ responsibility regarding academic integrity policy implementation in transnational contexts.

**Materials and preparation needed to answer case:**
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Background information on transnational relationships at the respective university.
- Copy of respective university’s assessment and moderation policy.
- Accompanying PowerPoint based on 1-2 hour workshop

**The case**

**Abstract**

An overworked, under-resourced sessional lecturer who teaches in multiple offshore environments is accused by her Australian Course Coordinator of allowing plagiarism to go unchecked in her students’ assignments. She is unsupported by her Head of School and feels compelled to seek advice from her Union regarding how she should proceed.

**Background**

Sally has been a sessional staff member on rolling contracts for over 10 years at an Australian university. Her job consists of teaching core business courses to large classes at an offshore partner institution in nearby Asian countries. She has no research or administrative responsibilities, and conducts no local teaching. All teaching materials are provided by the Australian lecturers who insist that Sally does not deviate from the lecture notes or Powerpoint presentations. This is to ensure absolute consistency between the domestic and offshore offerings of the courses. Sally has an offshore counterpart who teaches all the tutorials during the study period, following Sally’s one week lecturing visit at the beginning. The transnational partner is also provided with all teaching materials, assessments and mark sheets, and has no latitude to make any amendments. Sally is required to moderate a sample of marked assignments for each assessment task and provide a written report to the Head of School at the end of the study period regarding any discrepancies or concerns. Sally teaches eight such courses over seven study periods during the calendar year. Because of her extensive offshore experience, it is not unusual for the Head of School to ask Sally to take a new course with very little notice.

**Concerns about plagiarism**

Over the many years that Sally has been teaching in transnational contexts, there have been times when she has been concerned about potential plagiarism in students’ assignments. In the past she has forwarded such concerns to the Australian Course Coordinator. She is
sometimes informed about the outcome of an academic integrity investigation, and other times she hears on the grapevine how these cases have been dealt with. Often, she hands the case over and hears nothing. She has become highly skeptical that the university’s academic integrity policy is being implemented appropriately or consistently. Recently, her hectic teaching and travel schedule have meant that she barely has time to moderate assignments, let alone keep an eye out for plagiarism. She finds less and less plagiarism, although complains bitterly of a ‘drop in standards’.

The incident
Sally is asked, with just one week’s notice, to ‘deliver’ a new course at the University’s Malaysian partner. Although unfamiliar with the material, Sally is persuaded that she will be doing both the Australian Course Coordinator and the faculty a huge favour as there simply is no-one else available to help out at such short notice. Sally prepares to the best of her ability, reading most of the course materials on the overnight plane to Malaysia. She meets the local tutor briefly but has no further liaison with him during the rest of the visit or during the study period. Sally meets all of her administrative deadlines for the course and submits her final report to the Head of School stating that there had been no concerns with the assignments. She then heads offshore again to ‘deliver’ one of her usual courses.

When Sally returns she is asked to meet with the Head of School to discuss extensive plagiarism in the new course. The Head of School says that he is disappointed with Sally’s ‘lack of professionalism’ and cannot understand why Sally was not able to immediately identify the numerous instances of plagiarism and collusion by a large minority of students in the course. He asks why Sally did not check all assignments through the text-matching program available for use by all lecturers, and will not accept Sally’s explanation that time constraints prevented her from doing so. Following the meeting, Sally feels angry that her professionalism has been called into question and decides to refuse any future offshore assignments.

Questions for discussion
5. What is your university’s policy on assessment and moderation in transnational contexts?
   a. What are the responsibilities of the various stakeholders (local course coordinator, sessional lecturer, offshore lecturer, Head of School) to ensure integrity in student assessment?
6. What support is given to sessional staff in either transnational or local contexts to make use of resources such as text-matching software to ensure integrity in student assessment?
7. What specific support and training is provided to students in transnational settings to understand the requirements of the Australian university’s academic integrity policy?
8. If relevant, discuss your own experience of teaching in transnational settings, and any concerns you had in relation to academic integrity. How were your concerns addressed?
9. Brainstorm other academic integrity issues relevant to transnational education at your university.
Detection

The following case studies focus on scenarios that deal with the suspicion or detection of breaches of academic integrity:

- Learning advisors and confidentiality
- Plagiarism of computing code
- Social media and academic integrity
- Turnitin: a magic bullet?
Learning advisors and confidentiality

**Target audience:** Learning advisors, learning developers, supervisors  
**Key issue being addressed:** Role of learning advisors in supporting research students  
**Materials and preparation needed to answer case:**  
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.  
- Copy of university academic integrity policy and procedures.  
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.  
- Statement about the role of the student learning support unit and their role in working with students

The case

*Abstract*

*A learning advisor is concerned that a postgraduate student she has been working with has submitted a plagiarized research proposal.*

Harriet is a learning advisor who works in the student learning support unit. She sees students from across the university in individual consultations. Sometimes these students are referred to by their tutors or lecturers, and sometimes they make bookings on their own initiative, bringing with them a copy of their latest assignment and requesting advice on how to improve their writing or meet a particular assignment’s marking criteria.

This year, Harriet sees one particular postgraduate student fairly frequently in individual consultations. He is in his first year of his PhD and when he first turned up at the student support unit, he was very confused about academic writing expectations. Over the year his writing, referencing and critical analysis has gradually improved, but like many first international students, he is still struggling with academic writing and was very concerned about meeting a departmental deadline for a formal thesis proposal of 10,000 words.

During the consultations Harriet works with the student to improve his English grammar, while also helping him to refine and articulate his thesis’ research questions and navigate through a literature review.

Frequently, the student brings in drafts of the thesis proposal. This includes poorly written material with inadequate referencing and uneven writing, some of which has clearly been copied directly from the source. A lot of the discussion in the consultations focuses on how to incorporate references and paraphrase source material.

At a meeting toward the end of the year, just before his first year thesis proposal submission, the student appears with an almost immaculate thesis proposal which includes research questions that are similar but somewhat different to those discussed in earlier consultations. Harriet is convinced that this student has not produced this document on his own. She is told that he has already submitted it to the department.
Questions for discussion:

1. What would you do at this point if you were Harriet?
2. Would you:
   a. Contact the supervisor/department and advise them that you suspect the student has plagiarised?
   b. Consider that the individual consultation is confidential, so don’t contact the supervisor/department, but strongly advise the student to withdraw this document and resubmit work of their own?
   c. Something else?
Plagiarism of computer code

Target audience: Subject coordinators, academic integrity decision makers

Key issue being addressed: Issues surrounding the ‘re-use’ of unacknowledged sources of computer code

Purpose of the case: To illustrate some of the contexts of plagiarism beyond the copying of text

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

The case

Abstract
A subject coordinator is dismayed to find that many of his applied programming students have submitted assignments containing copied source code.

Jonathan is the subject coordinator in an undergraduate subject on applied programming. The assessment tasks in this subject require students to design, implement, test and debug simple programs using a specific programming language. The assignments require students to submit program source code. Jonathan knows that students can be tempted to copy code from friends, the Internet, or a ‘private tutor’ rather than create their own source code. Jonathan tries to design the subject and the assessment tasks to reduce the opportunities to do this because he recognizes that if students do not acquire the skills to manipulate the programming language they will not really have met the intended learning outcomes of the subject.

When one of Jonathan’s colleagues, Amy, asks if she can trial the program she has developed to test for shared code on some of the assignments submitted by Jonathan’s students Jonathan agrees, not thinking that any plagiarism of code would be detected. He is astonished to find over 15% of the students in his subject have submitted assignments containing code which Amy’s program indicates contains shared code. In Jonathan’s mind this means that students have copied.
Questions for discussion

1. What does your university policy say about designing the assessment of student learning to support student learning?

2. What does your university policy say about the copying and translation of computer code?

3. What does your university policy say about the copying and translation of computer code from one computer language into another (also called ‘porting’ or ‘inter-lingual plagiarism’)?

4. What other information would Jonathan need in order to make sound interpretations of the meaning of Amy’s findings?

5. What other strategies could Jonathan implement to reduce the incentive to, and risk of, students copying code?

6. It is acceptable for Jonathan to investigate the matters further given that students did not receive any notice that their assignments would be analyses using Amy’s program?

7. What information should Jonathan obtain about the quality of Amy’s program before using it to analyse student assignments

Suggested readings


Social media and academic integrity

Target audience: Tutors, students, course coordinators, academic integrity decision makers

Key issue being addressed: Ethics and academic integrity issues when using social media

Purpose of the case: To illustrate how concepts about academic integrity or ethical practice sometimes don’t translate clearly to students who use digital technologies

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.
- http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2012/jul/05/plagiarism-ip-rights-and-academic-integrity

The case

Abstract

*A student uses inappropriate photos of celebrities to support the argument in her assignment blog. The Subject Coordinator is concerned that the student does not understand the ethical issues involved.*

Lee is a tutor in a first year subject that involves teaching and learning activities across a variety of social media platforms. The major assessment task involves a project that students record on their individual blogs, while following, notifying about updates and giving feedback to their peers and teachers via Facebook and Twitter. One of Lee’s students decides to develop a project about media scandals about celebrities, and the issues surrounding the public/private circulation of information. In one post the student circulates a link to her blog post about the ethics of tabloids publishing pirated mobile phone photos of naked female celebrities. She illustrates this essay/blog post with samples of naked photos of these celebrities.

Lee calls the student in to discuss the appropriateness of circulating such pictures, which could be accessed by all students in the course, as well as tutors and lecturers via the class blog. The student justifies her actions by pointing out that the photos illustrate the argument of her blog post, and have been well referenced. Lee counters this by saying the student actually didn’t seem to understand the ethical issues involved. The student responds that in any case, she and her friends had collaborated writing all of their blog posts.
before publication in a private wiki, to which the tutor had not been invited. The student comments that she is not directly responsible for the text of the majority of the post, although she had called for ideas on Twitter and coordinated contributions on Facebook. She points out that although the final blog post was individual assessment task, she and her friends were enacting the spirit of the subject by using social media to work collaboratively.

Questions for discussion

1. Is this an issue of academic integrity, ethical research and writing practice, or student misconduct?
2. What does your university policy say about the application of academic integrity standards to Web 2.0 or social media?
3. It is acceptable for Lee to investigate the matters further given that she now knows that a group of students worked collaboratively on their individual assignments? How will she proceed and determine individual or group authorship?
Turnitin: a magic bullet?

**Target audience:** Subject/program coordinators, teachers, academic integrity breach investigation officers

**Key issue being addressed:** The use of software programs to manage plagiarism

**Purpose of the case:** To illustrate how the misuse or misunderstandings about text-matching software programs like Turnitin to manage plagiarism can impact on cultures of academic integrity

**Materials and preparation needed to answer case:**
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

**The case**

**Abstract**

Despite the university’s recommendation that Turnitin be used in an educative way, the software is used inconsistently across faculties. This creates poor assessment practice and confusion and anxiety for students.

Florence teaches a communications and academic writing program in a business studies faculty. This faculty has a policy that students must attach a Turnitin report to all of their assessment tasks, except exams. The rest of the university has access to Turnitin, but there isn’t a university-wide policy about its use, only recommendations that it be used for educative and not punitive purposes.

During orientation in the business faculty, students are given information about this policy and are quickly introduced to Turnitin as a text-matching software program that detects correlation between a student’s writing and online research sources, or previously submitted versions of the same assignment from other students or other years of delivery of the subject. At the orientation session, the students are advised that ‘the closest to zero they get in their Turnitin report, the better’.

Students often come to Florence in distress about their Turnitin reports, saying that they keep removing quotes and paraphrases to try to strip the report down to a zero result. This doesn't make sense to Florence, who knows that Turnitin can be used as a useful tool to indicate overlaps in research, but will often highlight writing that has actually been
appropriately referenced. Florence advises students that they shouldn't focus too much on the Turnitin scores, but should focus on writing well in response to the question and assignment instructions, make sure that they acknowledge their sources. She tells them that of course the teachers who are marking their assignments in other subjects will double-check the Turnitin report, most likely to ensure that no outrageous plagiarism has occurred, but that their grades have no correlation with the Turnitin scores.

However, Florence later comes across a memo from the sub-dean of the Faculty to new sessional teaching staff with instructions about how to use Turnitin. This is accompanied with a table that matches a range of Turnitin scores with recommended assignment grade scores, with zero percent from Turnitin in the high distinction bracket.

When she discusses this with other staff in the faculty, she is told that everyone really appreciates Turnitin because it has cut down on their workload: not only does it help streamline marking, it also means that subject coordinators don't have to rewrite assignment questions for essays and reports, which they would normally do to avoid students copying from previous year's work.

Questions for discussion

1. Does your university policy say anything about the use of text-matching software programs like Turnitin?
2. If it does, is the program presented as a plagiarism detection tool or an academic integrity educative tool?
3. How might text-matching software programs like Turnitin be used to help students avoid plagiarism and aid teaching staff in educating students about the value of academic integrity?
Investigation

These case studies explore issues such as confidentiality, extenuating circumstances and the time needed to conduct academic integrity breach investigations.

- Considering extenuating circumstances
- Investigation and confidentiality
- Privacy in the filing cabinet
- Workload implications for tutors
- You plagiarised your supervisor
Considering extenuating circumstances

**Target audience:** Academic integrity decision makers (AIDM) – those with the responsibility of determining outcomes for breaches of academic integrity by undergraduate students.

**Key issue being addressed:** Difficulty of making a decision on an academic integrity breach when multiple extenuating factors are involved.

**Purpose of the case:** To assist academic integrity decision makers to work through their own policy to address a complex case.

**Materials and preparation needed to answer case:**
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.
- Bretag, T. (2008) *Responding to plagiarism: The need to engage with students’ ‘real lives’,* refereed paper presented at the ATN Assessment Conference: Engaging students in assessment, University of South Australia, 20-21 November. (Note: the following case has been adapted from this paper)

**The case**

**Abstract**

An international student with poor English language skills is struggling to complete her degree. Her resubmission of a failed assignment is found to have been plagiarised and her case is passed on to the university’s Academic Integrity Decision Maker (AIDM) to determine an appropriate outcome. Despite a number of extenuating circumstances and the likelihood that this will result in a fail for the whole course, the AIDM determines that the student should receive a zero for the assessment.

**Background**

Vivienne is a 20 year-old business student from Mainland China, in her final semester of study at an Australian university. Although in her third year, Vivienne completed the first two years of her degree at the University’s Beijing campus. Her spoken English is tentative and she has been struggling to pass her courses since arriving in Australia six months ago. She is currently taking an extra course concurrently with her already full program, because she failed a course last semester. The feedback on her assignments suggest that her tutors are being generous in awarding (bare) pass grades in recognition of the dramatic learning she is currently undergoing in terms of language and discipline knowledge. Her last assignment in ‘Organisational Behaviour’, worth 15% of the overall course grade, scored a grade of 45% (F) and her tutor gave Vivienne the opportunity to resubmit as she had clearly not understood the topic. The tutor spent considerable time explaining the concepts to Vivienne, plus gave an extra week to resubmit the assignment. The second submission was virtually copied word for word from an Internet source, without acknowledgement, and the
tutor passed the case on to the Academic Integrity Decision Maker (AIDM) as per University policy.

The student meets with the AIDM
Having received a standard letter from the AIDM asking Vivienne to explain the high text-match in her assignment, Vivienne has now gone back to the tutor and asked that the original grade of 45% stand, and that the resubmission be disregarded. The tutor explains that in addition to University policy which states that in the case of resubmissions, the second mark stands regardless of whether it is higher or lower, the process is out of his hands. Vivienne reluctantly attends an initial meeting with the AIO. She arrives late, appears nervous and immediately repeats her request for the resubmission to be disregarded. The AIDM has met with a number of students during the week, and is inclined to take a firm line with this student. The usual type of penalty that would apply in this case would be a zero for the assignment, particularly given the extensive induction that all students receive in this particular program regarding academic integrity and academic conventions. The AIDM discusses the various penalties with the student and explains the rationale for zero. The student is visibly upset and explains that with marks to date only averaging 50%, a zero for the assignment may in fact cause her to fail the whole course.

Extenuating circumstances
The AIDM is in a quandary. Other students in the same course, and in similar academic circumstances, have received zero penalties for plagiarised assignments. But failing the whole course would be an unreasonable outcome for a student with no prior breaches of academic integrity. The AIDM asks if there are any extenuating circumstances that might be taken into account. At this point, the student breaks down and details the months of anxiety she has endured since discovering that her widowed mother has been diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. Vivienne is an only child and feels an overwhelming responsibility to return to China to care for her mother. However, her mother has insisted that Vivienne stay in Australia and complete her studies. By now Vivienne is heaving and crying and in terrible distress. This is no attempt to hoodwink the AIDM, but a genuine outpouring of emotion. Vivienne is desperate to return to her home country, is finding it difficult to concentrate on anything other than her mother’s illness, and is struggling to manage an increasingly overloaded academic program with arguably less than adequate English skills.

The outcome
After careful consideration of both the policy and previous academic integrity cases, as well as consulting with other AIDMS via the university’s AIDM Discussion Board, a determination is made that Vivienne should receive a zero penalty for the assignment.

Questions for discussion
1. Does your university’s policy allow for the consideration of ‘extenuating circumstances’ when determining an outcome for an academic integrity breach?
2. How would you determine if particular circumstances warrant deviation from usual practice?
3. Does your university offer opportunities to discuss academic integrity breach cases with other academic integrity decision makers? (e.g. discussion list; formal or informal mentoring, regular professional development, etc)

4. What support services are available at your university to support AIDMs to deal with potentially stressful situations?

5. Does your university offer other referral services for students like Vivienne? (E.g. counselling, English language support, international student support, etc). Are all staff aware of these services and how to refer students identified as being ‘at risk’?

6. Based on your own university’s policy, do think that the correct decision was made in this case?

7. Quite apart from your university’s policy, do you believe this outcome was fair? Why/why not?

8. Do you have any suggestions for how your university’s policy should deal with complex cases like this one?
Investigation and confidentiality

Target audience: Academic integrity decision makers

Key issue being addressed: How to support academic integrity decision makers to deal with ethical and professional issues

Purpose of the case: To assist academic integrity decision makers to work through their own policy to respond appropriately to an inappropriate staff request

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:

- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

The case

Abstract

Julie is a junior academic on a fixed term contract. She takes on the role of Academic Integrity Decision Maker (AIDM) but feels pressure to release confidential information about students who have breached the academic integrity policy to senior staff members. She seeks advice from the Chair of the Faculty Investigation Committee.

In an Australian university, a recently appointment academic has been asked to undertake the role of Academic Integrity Decision Maker (AIDM). This is a role that would normally be carried out by the Head of School or the Associate Head of School, but the size of the school (over 1000 students enrolled across three campuses and with some transnational teaching as well) contributes to the workload of all staff. Few staff willingly take on this role because they know that it is time consuming and that it requires wisdom and fortitude. Julie Smith is happy to take on this role as part of her academic governance. She was an undergraduate student of the school eight years earlier and so she knows how important it is that allegations of breaches of academic integrity are appropriately investigated.

Her role is to receive referrals of allegations of breaches of academic integrity from subject coordinators who have undertaken a preliminary investigation and consider if there is evidence of a breach and that the breach is not of the category that the subject coordinator themselves can deal with. Julie also acts as an advisor to less experienced subject coordinators who seek information on the university’s academic misconduct policy and procedures. The most frequent type of allegation is that of plagiarism. Sometimes the allegations concern collusion or copying from another student.
Julie is employed as a Level B Lecturer. She is undertaking doctoral studies in the same academic unit where she is employed. She does not yet have a continuing position and will be required to apply for her role within two years of commencing this full time position.

Towards the end of one academic year Julie finds that she is dealing with a number of academic integrity cases relating to students enrolled in the 100-level subjects of a three year degree. Most of these cases relate to plagiarism and poor academic practice in relation to the paraphrasing, citing and referencing of sources. The course coordinator requests a list of the names of those students enrolled in the degree program who have been found guilty of plagiarism. When Julie asks the coordinator why they want this information the response is, ‘So that I can keep an eye on these students for the rest of the course and be alert for any future allegations’.

Julie knows that the ‘Faculty Register’ of academic misconduct cases is confidential and can only be accessed by the Dean or the Chair of the Faculty Investigation Committee. This would explain why the course coordinator needs to ask Julie for information rather than asking for access to the Faculty Register.

Julie declines to provide the information that the course coordinator requests. She considers that she has to maintain the integrity of the process and the requirement that the investigation process remains confidential. However, she does have some misgivings because she does not have a continuing position and she knows that the course coordinator is a continuing Level C Senior Lecturer. She is concerned about how her decision would be interpreted by others (especially the Head of School whose recommendation she will be seeking when she applies for a continuing position).

She decides to seek the advice of the Chair of the Faculty Investigation Committee.

Questions for discussion

1. What does your university policy say about privacy and confidentiality in relation to the investigation of allegations of breaches of academic integrity?
2. What does your university policy say about privacy and confidentiality in relation to the finding of investigations of allegations of breaches of academic integrity?
3. According to the policy of your university who is permitted access to information about allegations/investigations/findings in relation to student academic misconduct?
4. How does the ‘custom and practice’ of your university align with the intent of the relevant policies?
5. How would you determine if particular circumstances warrant deviation from usual practice?
6. Does your university have mechanisms for staff (particularly those with critical types of delegated authority) to seek confidential advice when faced with difficult decisions such as this one? What are these and how do staff find out about them?
7. Based on your own university’s policy, do think that the correct decision was made in this case?
8. Do you have any suggestions for how your university’s policy could be improved to better support the academic integrity decision maker?

9. Is there any conflict of interest here? Should Julie be an academic integrity officer while she is a higher degree research student in the same academic unit?
Privacy in the filing cabinet

Target audience: Policy and Governance Units, Subject Coordinators, Teachers, Administrative Staff

Key issue being addressed: How to incorporate ethical principles into everyday faculty information access practices

Purpose of the case: To assist staff to work through their own policy to respond appropriately to an inappropriate staff request

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:

- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

The case

Abstract

A new staff member challenges the accepted practice at the university that staff members are freely permitted to consult ‘the book’ which contains details of students who have breached academic integrity policy.

In the Faculty of an Australian university the register of academic misconduct matters is maintained in a locked filing cabinet in the office of a senior administrative staff member. Each case is also recorded in a bound numbered book which is also kept in the locked filing cabinet.

It has been custom and practice for academic staff to consult ‘the book’ if they have a suspicion about plagiarism, collusion or copying by students enrolled in subjects offered by the faculty. If they find that there have been previous instances where the academic practice of a particular student has been called into question they are more likely to spend time acting on their initial suspicion and, as a result, to more thoroughly investigate the matter they are concerned about.

This practice of open access of the register of student academic misconduct matters has been unquestioned for several years. A new member of staff hears of the practice and is aghast. They have a number of concerns and seek consensus from their colleagues in the faculty about changing the practice.

There is resistance and a claim that student knowledge of the existence of ‘The Book’ acts as a strong deterrent to student academic misconduct, particularly in relation to plagiarism.
Questions for discussion

1. What does your university policy say about privacy and confidentiality in relation to the investigation of allegations of breaches of academic integrity?
2. What does your university policy say about privacy and confidentiality in relation to the finding of investigations of allegations of breaches of academic integrity?
3. According to the policy of your university who is permitted access to information about allegations/investigations/findings in relation to academic misconduct?
4. How does the ‘custom and practice’ of your university align with the policy?
5. What mechanisms does your university have in place to provide assurance that its undertakings in relation to privacy and confidentiality are maintained?
6. What advice might you offer the new staff member who seeks to have the custom and practice of this particular faculty change?
Workload implications for tutors

Target audience: Subject coordinators, tutors, sessional staff

Key issue being addressed: The role of tutors in fostering a culture of academic integrity; implications to workload of investigating breaches of academic integrity.

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.
- Casual/sessional staff workload agreement

The case

Abstract

A new staff member on a casual contract encounters plagiarism in some assignments. The procedure to address breaches of academic integrity at her university is so onerous and time-consuming that the other tutors advise her to handle the matter via reduction in marks.

Susan is a new tutor on a casual contract at this university. She is paid by the hour for teaching a number of tutorials per week in a core undergraduate subject, marking three assessment tasks, and a couple of meetings with the subject coordinator and the other tutors. In common with many other new tutors, she spends a lot more time than the hours allocated in preparing for her classes and marking the assessment tasks.

In order to meet a departmental deadline Susan marks up to one hundred essays within one particular week, and she finds eight essays that she considers contain serious and different breaches of academic integrity. She completes her marking of all the essays, and annotates the suspect essays with comments aligning with the marking criteria but doesn’t give these essays a final mark. Instead, she contacts the subject coordinator to let him know the final marks for her entire student cohort but says that she still has eight essays that she is confident have been plagiarised in some way and that she would now like him to assess these.

The subject coordinator emails her back saying he is shocked by the high number of students plagiarising in Susan’s tutorials. He asks her to write a report about each individual suspect essay, and to track down ‘proof’ that each essay contains plagiarism. After she has done that, he will contact the plagiarism investigative officer in the department to launch a case. This evidence is necessary because at this particular university the investigation officer is not responsible for assembling the evidence only for making a decision about the allegation in collaboration with the subject coordinator. The university policy indicates that a staff member must bring an allegation of academic misconduct by a student to the
attention of the subject coordinator once the misconduct has been identified and provide the Subject Coordinator with relevant information and evidence relating to the allegation.

Susan has already spent more time per suspect essay than any other piece of marking, and knows that it will take her more hours of extra time per essay to trace the sources and write a brief report. She is distressed that she has been regarded to be at fault for not instilling appropriate academic integrity standards in her classes.

She consults with her fellow tutors. They all say that they have come across similar cases in the same subject where they are sure a student has plagiarised but decided to simply remove marks for poor referencing for individual essays rather than instigate an academic integrity investigation, because they know how much time and effort is involved.

Questions for discussion:
1. If you were a tutor in this subject, what would you have done?
2. If tutors are responding inconsistently to breaches of academic integrity, what impact does this have on student perceptions of fairness and, in turn, on their cynicism about higher education more generally?
3. If time to investigate breaches was factored into the workload, what do you think would be the impact on the culture of academic integrity at your university?
4. What is the custom and practice of your academic unit in relation to assembling evidence of suspected plagiarism or other breaches of academic integrity?
5. What does policy say about the responsibilities of casual tutors/subject coordinators in relation to substantiating suspected breaches of academic integrity, particularly plagiarism?
6. What does your university policy and industrial awards say about how requirements for sessional staff workload beyond teaching, meeting, marking and student consultation? How can these be reconciled with one another? Do workload allowances for subject coordinators acknowledge their own ‘academic integrity’ workload?
7. What support is currently available for sessional staff in relation to student assessment in general, and investigating suspected breaches of academic integrity in particular?
You plagiarised your supervisor

**Target audience:** Senior academic staff, Research supervisors, Academic staff developers

**Key issue being addressed:** Academic integrity and understanding academic writing

**Purpose of the case:**
1. To assist academic staff in weighing up what is deemed to be ‘common knowledge’ and what is required to be acknowledged in a research assignment.
2. To discuss the relationship between academic integrity and academic literacy development, particularly in courses where relatively little writing is required.

**Materials and preparation needed to answer case:**
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

**The case**

*Abstract*

An Engineering Honours student faces a charge of plagiarism after he uses his supervisor’s published framework as the starting point for his thesis.

Van is a near-native speaker of English, having left Vietnam with his family and arrived in Australia as a child. He has just completed his Honours year in Engineering. Throughout the four years of the course there has been little need for any writing in continuous prose, such as essays or reports. Assignments have tended to focus on problems and solutions expressed in short paragraphs, annotated diagrams and mathematical symbols; and assessment criteria required students to demonstrate their comprehension through applications of existing methodologies and formulae. Van’s final assessment is by a 50-page thesis which requires demonstration of a higher level of creative problem-solving. All students at this level are assigned a supervisor to guide them and to provide formative feedback on the content and the structure of their writing. The thesis requires an introduction to explain the problem posed and the process by which it is to be solved; this is followed by a creative solution in text which relies increasingly on the use of symbols and formulae, the communication method in which Van is more at home than in the writing of extended prose.

Van had been an exceptionally bright student and his thesis impresses his first examiner with the elegance of his method and solution. His second examiner, however, notes a slight change in style within the introductory pages. She googles a key phrase from this section, and discovers that Van’s chosen method has close similarities with a published method. She further notes that the author of the publication is none other than his own supervisor.
Van’s case is handed to the faculty’s academic integrity officer, who himself an engineer, finds that while the methodology is indeed based on an approach developed and published by his supervisor, Van’s adaptation and solution are quite creative, as required for the assessment. Van is called to an initial meeting which is mandatory following a suspected plagiarism incident. He asserts that he was not intending to cheat, and explains that he was unaware that he needed to reference his supervisor’s method which he had quite openly used as the starting point for his adaptation. In the meantime, the first examiner has put the thesis through the text-matching tool Turnitin.com, only to find matches for a large number of phrases and even some complete sentences throughout Van’s prose.

Points for consideration
- The role of formative and summative assessment practices
- The amount of discretion allowed for by the University’s academic integrity policy
- The amount of induction that students receive into academic writing
- The level of supervision and feedback they receive while writing

Questions for discussion
4. What in your view would be an appropriate outcome for Van?
5. What position might the supervisor take in this situation?
6. What position might the academic integrity officer take?
7. What aspect of your university’s policy would you invoke to respond to this situation?
8. Does your Academic Integrity policy give prominence to assessment principles or refer to an Assessment Policy?
9. Do these policies link Academic Integrity to academic writing, feedback, curriculum design?

Some useful references

Bretag et al (under review) ‘Teach us how to do it properly!’ An Australian academic integrity student survey, Studies in Higher Education.

I have a sound knowledge and understanding in relation to referencing but this was only picked up over time. Over my four years at [this university] I have always been unsure whether I am satisfactorily meeting the academic integrity policy with my work, but I have never received any breaches. [Student comment]


In too many cases, testing is used as the measure to judge whether change has occurred rather than as a mechanism to further enhance and consolidate learning by teachers or students (p104).

It seems that the considerations which need to be made with regard to plagiarism education should be no different to the pedagogical considerations for any other topic. In fact, it may be argued that since the potential consequences of not understanding plagiarism are more serious than the potential consequences of not understanding a disciplinary topic, then greater consideration needs to be given to how best to help students understand plagiarism [p166].

http://www.herdsa.org.au/?page_id=1371#M

While plagiarism by students who deliberately set out to deceive the assessor clearly equates with cheating or fraud, and while fostering honesty, ethical behaviour and professional attitudes is integral to the learning goals set out by universities, there is also an increasing awareness that much of the identified plagiarism may be the result of students’ inadequate understanding of the procedures, and indeed the reasons for the academic requirements. (p483)
Outcomes

These case studies explore issues of student awareness of breach outcomes and the case of law students where a breach of academic integrity can have long term implications.

I heard you get expelled for plagiarism
Law students are a special case
I heard you get expelled for plagiarism

**Target audience:** Academic integrity decision makers, senior academic staff, policy makers

**Key issue being addressed:** Concerns about disclosing academic integrity breach outcomes to students.

**Purpose of the case:** To assist academic staff to consider why students may wish to know how academic integrity breaches are dealt with at their university.

**Materials and preparation needed to answer case:**
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.

**The case**

**Abstract**

A ‘first in family’ undergraduate student is nervous about the consequences for plagiarism and works hard to use sources appropriately in her assignments. Despite her best efforts, she finds herself facing an academic integrity investigation and decides to withdraw from her studies rather than cause her family shame.

Joyce is an 18-year old Indigenous student from Central Australia. She has recently moved to Adelaide to pursue a degree in Tourism and Hospitality. She is the first member of her family to attend university. Joyce’s family speaks Pitjantjatjar at home, although English was the language of instruction at her Anangu school.

During Orientation, Joyce attends a number of lectures and seminars on academic integrity. She learns that the university takes breaches of academic integrity very seriously, and that penalties range from resubmitting assignments through to expulsion from the university. When Joyce hears that expulsion is a possibility, she becomes very anxious. While she did well at her Anangu school, Joyce is nervous that the standard there was perhaps not as high as other high schools. She thinks back to how she wrote her assignments and is worried that she may have accidentally plagiarised in the past. She could not face her family if she was expelled from university and determines to be scrupulous in referencing every aspect of her assignments.

Joyce completes the first assignments for her four courses carefully. To make sure she doesn’t plagiarise, and because she is a little apprehensive about using academic English, Joyce provides quotes in nearly every paragraph of her assignment, and includes appropriate in-text references. To her great dismay, Joyce fails every assignment. Her lecturers explain that she is expected to use ‘critical thinking’ and that cutting and pasting quotations does not demonstrate her understanding of the topic. For the next assignments, Joyce rewrites all the material in her own words, and provides appropriate in-text references. Again, she fails every assignment. Her lecturers explain that her arguments were ‘incoherent’ and lacked a central thesis.
Joyce is becoming increasingly apprehensive about her studies, but after making some friends from one of her tutorial classes, learns of a new strategy to write her assignments. The students advise her to copy the words directly from the source (books would be best, rather than internet sources), provide in-text references, but only occasionally use quotation marks for longer, indented quotes. Joyce tries this method and is pleased to receive Credits and Distinctions for her next assignments. Her tutors provide positive feedback and encourage her on her excellent progress.

Joyce manages to pass all of her courses and proceeds to the second semester. Her family and community are very proud of her achievements. At around this time, the university sets up a new assessment process whereby all assignments are automatically submitted to text comparison software. Joyce continues to sign the mandatory assignment cover sheet stating “I declare the work in this document to be my own, except where acknowledgement of sources is made”. Within a day of submitting her first assignment under this new process, Joyce receives an automatically generated email, stating that her work has been forwarded the Academic Integrity Officer for investigation.

Frightened and anxious, Joyce asks her various friends what they think will happen and she receives conflicting information. Some say, ‘Don’t worry. You’ll probably just have to do the assignment again’. Others tell stories of students who were suspended or even expelled. Joyce goes online and trawls through the university’s 100 page academic integrity policy. The policy has all sorts of information, but nowhere can she find examples of similar situations and details of how the university responded. Joyce cannot determine whether she has committed an ‘intentional’ breach of academic integrity requiring a serious penalty or an ‘inadvertent’ breach which has an educational response. Joyce recalls her Orientation earlier in the year and is convinced that she will be expelled.

With the meeting with the Academic Integrity Officer looming, and not wanting to shame her family by being expelled, Joyce decides to quit her university studies and return to her hometown.

Questions for discussion
10. Based on your own university’s policy, do you think Joyce committed an academic integrity breach?
11. How would your university respond to this situation?
12. What do you think would be an appropriate outcome for Joyce’s actions?
13. How might the academic integrity process provide reassurance to students that they will not be unduly penalised?
14. Do you think universities should make available to students and the broader academic community information about academic integrity breaches and the associated outcomes/penalties?
   a. How might this be done?
   b. What are the advantages of providing breach outcome information to students?
   c. What are the disadvantages?
Law students are a special case

Target audience: Law students, law academics.

Key issues being addressed: The potential life-long implications of a breach by a law student and the importance of not aggravating the breach by subsequently appearing to minimise its importance.

Purpose of the case: To help law students take seriously the citing and referencing of other people’s work; to encourage law students to start thinking like a lawyer to the extent it involves being and appearing to be scrupulously honest.

Materials and preparation needed to answer the case:
- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.
- Case of Richardson (2003) TASCC 9
- Case of AJG (2004) QCA 88
- Re Liveri (2006) QCA 152
- Case of Humzy-Hancock (2007) QSC 34
- In the Matter of OG (2007) VSC 520

The case

Abstract

In his application for admission to practice law, a graduate fails to disclose a breach of academic integrity that occurred in his first year as an undergraduate. This lack of disclosure is discovered and he is struck off.

A first year law student was reported by his tutor for cheating after a small assignment shows unacceptably high levels of unreferenced text matching. After an investigation the law school finds the cheating proved, but in the circumstances allows the student to pass the course with a warning about referencing and a slightly reduced mark.

The student learns from the experience and is not reported again for any breach over the next five years of study. The student graduates with an LLB and applies to the Supreme Court for admission to practice law. In the application form the applicant has to respond to the statement: ‘I am and always have been of good fame and character.’ The applicant can hardly remember the incident of cheating six years previously and marks the form so as to agree with the statement.

Another question asks the applicant to respond to ‘I am not and have never been the subject of disciplinary action in a tertiary education institution.’ This time the applicant recalls the cheating allegation in his first year of study but decides to ignore it because it was a minor incident and so long ago. He decides ‘disciplinary action’ must refer to significant cases where students fail the course or are banned from the university. The application is accepted and the man is admitted to practice as a lawyer.
However, following a tip-off, the Law Society investigates the man's academic record, discovers the proven incident of cheating and applies to the Supreme Court to have him struck off. The Supreme Court agrees, removing him from the roll of practitioners. The reason for judgment makes little reference to the cheating incident but relies on the man's failure to acknowledge it in his application for admission to practice.

Questions for discussion with law lecturers:
1. Do your courses include sufficient material on academic integrity?
2. Does the design of your courses adequately motivate the students to take the academic integrity content seriously?
3. Should you allow the serious implications of a breach by a law student to affect your application of academic integrity policy in investigating a breach, or in determining a penalty if a breach is proved, or in recording the outcome?

Questions for discussion with law students:
1. Why do you think the implications of a finding of breach by a law student are more serious than for other students?
2. Do you think that difference is unfair or justifiable, and for what reasons?
3. If you disagree with the system, what would be a fairer system and why?
4. Based on your experiences at law school so far, can you think of a better way to help law students learn and take seriously good practice in academic integrity?